

PLAIN
REASONS

AGAINST
The adding of Mr. *Dunlop's*
Preface unto the *Westmin-*
ster Confession of Faith,
1719.

IN A
LETTER

TO
A Minister, a Member of
the Committee for Puri-
ty of Doctrine; now pre-
sented to publick View.

Printed in the Year 1722.

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the Teaching of Mr. Dwyer's
Promises into the Welsh
Apostasy of Faith.

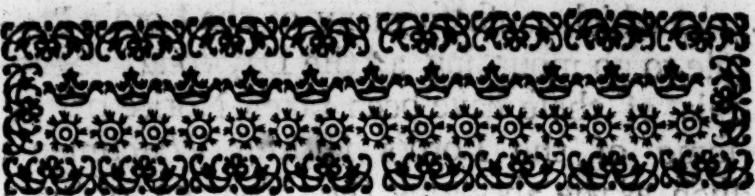


LETTER

TO

A Minister, a Member of
the Committee for Pro-
tection of Dogmas; now pro-
posed to publish View.

Printed in the Year 1792.



*Plain Reasons against the adding of
Mr. Dunlop's Preface unto the
Westminster Confession of Faith,
1719, &c.*

Reverend and dear Sir,

TH E noble Character which you have justly got of a faithful Minister of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, truly zealous for the Honour of our great Lord and Master, has induced me to give you this Trouble. Had I thought you, like too many in our Day, in Coldness and Indifference for the poor backsliden Church of *Scotland*, I should not have address'd myself to you: But I can assure you, that many of the Lord's People have great Expectations, that you will, like a true Gospel Minister of this Church, oppose these Inno-

vations which are brought in amongst us, and which cause so many of the Lord's People to go mourning all the Day-long. Several of these have been taken Notice of, by some of the Lord's faithful Watchmen; such as the abridging the Number of Sermons at the solemn Ordinance of the Supper; The Overtures for giving Ministers a Negative over their Sessions; and many more, too tedious to mention. But there is one which has not been sufficiently noticed, (tho' there were some short Remarks made upon it, in a most excellenr Letter concerning the Defections, &c. of the Church of Scotland) which is the joining a most unsuitable Preface to the new Impression of the *Westminster* Confession of Faith. I shall lay before you a great many very weighty Reasons, why this Preface ought not to be joined with the *Confession*; and I doubt not but you will be convinced by them, and endeavour to get such an unworthy Piece removed from the high Place it is now honoured with. (Oh! for a Day of Power when all such corrupt Weeds shall be rooted out of Christ's Vineyard.)

First, This Author constantly defends and pleads for *Toleration, unbanded Toleration*, pag. 52. "Any Number of Persons may
"voluntarily unite themselves to such Pur-
"poses

“ poses, and under such Regulations, as ap-
 “ pear useful and convenient to them; pro-
 “ vided they be agreeable to the Rights
 “ of others, and the Rules of Justice, (*and*
of this themselves are Judges, for he tells
 in a little after, *Every Man must judge*
for himself.) “ Nor could any Foreign-
 “ er pretend to intrude himself into a
 “ Society, which is founded upon Consent, or
 “ usurp the Management of its Concerns.”
 And again, pag. 53. he tells us, “ A Man
 “ has a Right to choose, not only what
 “ Party of Christians he will join, but even
 “ what *Religion* he will imbrace: For, *says*
 “ *he*, as every Man must judge for himself,
 “ and answer to God for his own Soul, he
 “ hath a Right independent of another, to
 “ choose what *Religion* he will imbrace.”
 Certainly, if Jews, Turks and Heathens,
 have a Right to exercise their own Religion,
 it must be very unjust not to allow them
 this Right: And not to *tolerate* them is a
Sin; which is an Assertion directly contrary
 to 109 *Quest. L. Cat.* which says, That a-
 mong the Sins forbidden in the Second Com-
 mandment, the *tollerating a false Religion is*
one: And contrary to C. 23. § 3. of the *West-*
minster Confession, which teaches us, “ That
 “ the Magistrate hath Authority, and it is
 “ his Duty to take Order that the Truth of
 “ God

“ God be kept pure and intire; that all
 “ Blasphemies and Heresies be suppressed.”
 Now if every Man has a *Right* to *imbrace*
 and *follow* his own Religion, how can the
 Magistrate have a *Right* to *suppress* him, and
 forbid him the Exercise of his Religion.
 Oh! how deplorable is our Defection, when
 the Doctrines and Truths of God are thus
 corrupted, and openly contradicted. What
 Errors and Superstitions may not break in u-
 pon us, when so wide a Door is set open for
 them; and these unchristian Doctrines are
 join'd to our Confession of Faith. How can
 we mourn enough for these Things? Sure
 the Lord has a Controversy against this
 Land, that he permits such poisonous No-
 tions to spread amongst us.

2dly, He does not defend the Use of
Confessions from *Presbyterian Principles*: He is
 so far from this, that he puts all Church-Gov-
 ernment upon a Level, and says, “ The
 “ People may refer the Inquiry into the Qua-
 “ lifications of those they choose for their
 Ministers, to the Rulers of their Society: But
 he does not say whether these Rulers ought
 to be Bishops or Presbyterian Ministers; and
 the Arguments he uses conclude for the one,
 as well as for the other. For he tells us,
 pag. 55. “ It must be allowable for the Ru-
 “ lers of that Society, to take all proper
 “ Mea-

“ Measures to discover, whether a Person is
 “ in this Respect qualified for an Ecclesiasti-
 “ cal Office.” So that the Rulers must
 judge, no Matter what the Rulers be; nay,
 I don’t see they need to be Ministers at all,
 according to him: And therefore we may
 justly say,

3dly, It countenances Patronages, for
 if the Society do but agree in any Thing,
 it presently becomes right and good, and
 their Rulers are to judge; perhaps he means
 secular Rulers: For there is nothing there,
 nor in his whole Preface, which should in-
 cline us to think he means Church Rulers ra-
 ther than Civil; and so, because our Civil
 Rulers have establish’d Patronages, we are to
 have a great Opinion and high Esteem of
 that intolerable, Antichristian Yoke. Thus
 we must be doom’d for ever to groan under
 that heavy Burden, which is so great a Gri-
 vance to all, who have any Savour of Religi-
 on left. After this much is said, we will be
 less surprized to find,

4thly, That he maintains such Notions as
 seem to condemn those who suffered in the
 late Times, and to justify at least some Part
 of the Persecution rais’d against the Lord’s
 Servants, by those People of Abominations
 and Violence. For, says he, p. 70. “ Eve-
 “ ry Society is Master of its own Favours.”

And

And p. 69. " There is little Reason to call
 " the abstracting a Benefice, Persecution ;
 " and if he departs from an establish'd Con-
 " fession, he suffers very great Hardships ;
 " but there is nothing wrong, or unjust in it."

And his whole Reasoning upon this Head
 plainly implies, That a Stipend may very
 justly be taken away from any Gospel Mini-
 ster, if he will not comply with all the
 Terms, even the most unreasonable, which
 they that are in Authority shall please to im-
 pose. What is the Drift of this, may plain-
 ly be discerned ; and what honest Ministers in
 our Day, some would rejoice to see dealt
 with after this Manner, I need not mention.

5thly, If the People were to be poisoned
 with the Contagion of *Arrianism*, which is
 spreading so widely in *England*, they might
 justly turn off Presbyterian Ministers, and
 take in *Arrians* ; and, if this should happen,
 Presbyterian Ministers must not complain,
 nor endeavour to get their Churches, but
 may abandon their Flocks. For he tells us,
 p. 53. " As every Society hath a Right to
 " determine to whose Government and In-
 " struction it shall submit, so it must natu-
 " rally have a Power to judge concerning
 " the necessary Qualifications of Persons,
 " whom they design to entrust with that sa-
 " cred Office. " And in the next Page,

" Nor

“ Nor can a Man, in any Justice, tho’ he
 “ thinks himself extremely qualified to an-
 “ swer the Purpose, for the Sake of which
 “ Rulers are establish’d in Society, intrude
 “ himself into a Society which think other-
 “ wise.” So that, tho’ a Gospel Minister
 be perfectly satisfied of his Abilities to in-
 struct the People in the Truth as it is in Je-
 sus, yet because they, being poison’d with
 the *Arrian* Hérésey, think an *Arrian* the fitter
 Teacher, it is a Piece of *Injustice* in him to go
 and instruct the People in these great Truths
 concerning which they err. “ And a Fo-
 “ reigner must not pretend to intrude him-
 “ self into a Society which is founded upon
 “ Consent, or usurp the Management of its
 “ Concerns.” p. 52. And we need not doubt,
 but such an impious Society would bind them-
 selves together by the closest Bond of Iniqui-
 ty, and would found themselves upon Con-
 sent.

6thly, It is putting our Confession of Faith
 upon a Level with the Popish Catechisms,
 or with the *Mahumetan’s Alcoran*; for he tells
 us, *It is very just and reasonable, that a Society*
should have a Confession of Faith; particularly it
is fit and proper for this Church to have a pub-
lick Standard; And what is the Reason that
is alledged for this? Is it not this? Because
the Society chooses it, and every Society may

choose what it pleases ; no Foreigner must intrude to direct them in the Management : And therefore, if that is fit and proper which the People choose, the *Alcoran* must be a very fit and proper Book : And no Body must presume to blame the *Mahumetans*, or Papists for their Choice : Every Man must judge for himself, and no Foreigner must intrude. This is running too much upon the Inclinations of the People, who are, thro' the natural Folly and Vanity in the Heart of Man, since the Fall, too apt to follow Vanity and Error. This is very far from giving the World juster Notions of Confessions, as he promises in the Beginning. I think he would have done better, to have shown, that People ought both to believe the great Truths of the Gospel, and to have chosen faithful Ministers to preach those to them. This is much better than saying, Every Society should follow their own Notions, be they never so wild and erroneous, and oblige Ministers to preach those false and dangerous Doctrines to them.

7thly, He promises a *Vindication* of Confessions of Faith, but does in Reality betray the Cause which he pretends to defend. He brings no Proof from the Word of God, for our Use of our Confession of Faith, which might so easily have been done, but trusts all to his carnal Reasonings, endeavouring to
 prove,

prove, that if the People will, they may set up any Confession of Faith ; for the People may choose any Thing they please, and so Confessions may all be put down : No Body is to blame, if the People do but choose to put them down. A Foreigner must not intrude to direct them in their Management. All the Rights of Society plead as well for no Confession as for a Confession, and so can never prove we ought to have a Confession, rather than not have one. But how easily might he have proven from Scripture, that it is our Duty to have such a Standard of Truth, as the *Westminster* Confession, when there is so erroneous Doctrine, and so many poisonous Errors crept into the Church ? Had our Confession been defended in a *Christian Way*, it should have been defended from the *Word of God*. O ! how deplorable is our Defection, that when we are to defend the Practice of this Church, we never compare it with the Rules which Jesus Christ has left us to examine whether it be agreeable to them, and built upon the Word of God ? Yet he tells us, *Pag. 58*. That he *considers the Church as a Christian Society, enter'd into for spiritual Purposes*, and yet never considers the Will of Christ in this Matter. There is also another Instance which looks like betraying the Cause, which you have, *Pag. 56*. where he defends

our Confession, from its being made by the Agreement of the whole Nation, the several lesser Societies meeting together and agreeing to this. If he cannot instruct this Fact; he gives our Adversaries an Advantage; and, if he can instruct it, it will not prove the Necessity of our Confession, and the Excellency of it; for it is not good and useful, because the People or the Parliament establishes it, but because it is built and founded upon the Word of God, and agreeable thereto, as may easily be proven. Besides, it is notour, there never were any such Meetings of the whole People, as he supposes.

8^{thly}, This Author's Principles are contrary to our Covenants: For, according to him, every Society must follow their own Notions; no Foreigner must interfere. Now, we must always be Foreigners (*i. e.* not a Member of that Society or Church, for that is his Meaning, as is plain,) to those Societies, who have Bishops, Service-Books, and many of the filthy Ceremonies of Popery; and therefore, we never can with any Justice direct them in their Management, or endeavour to root out Prelacy, since this is intruding, and managing a Society of which we are not Members. How agreeable this is to our Covenant, let any one judge; and is not this to condemn all the noble Zeal of our pious Forefathers, to
root

root out Prelacy? I must observe, that it is only what might be expected from such Hands, that the Covenants should not be published in this new Impression of the Confession of Faith. No wonder he should be desirous of burying any Thing, so contrary to his own false Notions of Things.

9thly, He builds all upon his natural Reason, and neglects the Proofs which are so many, and so plain in the Word of God; yet, tho' he trusts so much to his carnal Reason, we will easily discern that his Notions are not agreeable to the Principles of Reason: For, according to him, any Society may establish what Articles they please; no Matter whether they be true or false; which he never considers: (Strange Neglect!) But certainly nothing is more contrary to right Reason, than to say, That any Society may establish the greatest Untruths, and that they have a Right to establish the most fundamental Errors. I don't see, but he would be a very good Advocate for these astonishingly profane Clubs, which are set up at *London*; for, according to him, every Society has a Right to pay a Man for preaching any Doctrine they please; now these Monsters of Profanity, would no doubt have all Religion and Belief of a God, preach'd against, and the great and fundamental Doctrines

trines of our holy Religion ridiculed; and no Foreigner, no Body, that is not a Member of their hellish Society, must intrude, or direct them in their Managment. Can any Society have a Right to establish any Thing false or profane? Are not all Men obliged to come to the Knowledge of the Truth? If so, how can they have a Right to establish what is false, and to pay a Man to teach them nothing but that? Are these Things agreeable to Reason? To say nothing how contrary they are to Scripture.

10thly, He waves all the best and true Arguments for our Use of the Confession of Faith, p. 51. And this he does for such a Reason as any Member of the Church of Scotland should blush to use, viz. Because it would engage him in many intricate Questions about Church Government, and because learned Men have raised many Disputes upon this Head. Now, should not any Member of this Church be ashamed to give such a Reason as this? Can any Thing be more plain from the Word of God, than that Presbytery is of Divine Right, and founded upon the Word of God? What Intricacy or Difficulty is there in proving this, when it is so fully set forth in Scripture, as well as the Duty of Ministers, in this Respect, to reject those that are erroneous and heretical? But it were

were no difficult Matter, to find out a Reason, why this Author would not defend our Confession upon Presbyterian Principles: He was to be a great Patron and Defender of the *Overtures*, which do not so well agree with Presbyterian Principles, and so he would not defend in one Place, what he resolved to contradict and overthrow in another.

11thly, He seems to represent the Differences among Protestants, as small and inconsiderable. Would, says he, p. 33. the several Parties of Protestants, consider in what great Things we all concur, &c. "*Arminians, Socinians, Arminians, &c.* are among the several Parties of Protestants; and little did we consider, that Men of all these Divisions, may be *alike* Pilgrims and Strangers upon the Earth, and may all in Sincerity make Religion their principal Study, and agree in the Choice of God for their Portion, and *preferring the Honour of Christ* to their quickest Joys, &c." Little lower; he is for such an extensive Charity, as would unite good Men of all Denominations. I own, we should pity and pray for those, who have fallen into any dangerous Mistakes; but I don't see we should have such an high Opinion of them, as to think, that, in Sincerity, they make Religion their principal Study, and choose God for their Portion, and pre-
fer

for the Honour of Christ to every Thing else, and yet fall into the damnable Errors of Socinians, Arrians, &c. nor should be desirous of mixing and uniting with Men, who have apostatized from the Faith, in the most fundamental Articles: *Come out from amongst them, and be ye Seperate*, is a much wiser and safer Way.

12thly As if this Author knew of no Corruptions, or Grievances among us, he asserts, that our "*Reformation* is kept in its "*primitive Extent and Vigour*," pag. 138. Oh! how great a Blessing would it be, if Things were so; and how many poor Souls would rejoice, who now walk in Mourning and Sorrow? But it seems he has other Thoughts of Things, and can see no Marks of Coldness and Defection among us. Is the intolerable Yoke of Patronages no Greivance? Is not the almost unbounded Toleration, the *English Service*, the Backsliding of so many of our great Ones; the Coldness of many Ministers; and the little Regard that is had to our Covenants, and the Neglect to use any Endeavours to get them renewed; are not these Things Marks of great Backslidings? Can it be said, our Reformation is preserved in its primitive Extent and Vigour, while these and many other Defections so visibly appear? Or, is this Author unconcerned at these Things

Things, and thinks them no Greivances nor Defections.

13^{thly}, He seems to fall into a very great Mistake about the *Moral Law*. Our Confession teaches, That Believers are not under the *Moral Law*, as a Covenant of Works, but this Author tells us, pag, 19. " That " our Obligation to the *Moral Law* is *no Way* " *dissolved* by the Gospel, " Then we are still (according to him) obliged to obey it as a *Covenant of Works*, since it once was so, and therefore must always continue so, since it was no way dissolved by the Gospel. I am not at all surprized to find that a Man of these Principles, should spend several Pages, in attacking, and accusing the *Marrow of modern Divinity*, which so many great Divines have recommended, tho' it was altogether extraneous, to his Design : He tells us, That that Book contains several Things *rude* and *prophane* against the Law of God. I am sure what he asserts, is much more so against the Gospel.

What I have already said, is abundantly sufficient to convince you, how unfit a Piece that is to be bound up with the *Westminster Confession*. Nay, I think if it must be read at all by the People, they ought to be cautioned concerning these Things, and some others obvious enough, I might add.

14^{thly}, I am informed, that this Preface was joined to the Confession, without any Orders from the *Assembly*; it was neither approved nor authorized by them. I think such Boldness and Presumption ought to be taken Notice of; and the rather, because if it be continued there, the next Generation will be apt to think, that the General Assembly approves of every Thing that is contained in it, which I am perswaded they will never do, nor countenance any Thing so contrary to the Whole of our Doctrine.

15^{thly}, I cannot think, That the Performance of *one* private Person, *not* so much as a Minister, is fit to be joined with our excellent Confession, the Work of so *many* great Divine. These things don't agree well together. I think it is too great an Honour done to such a Performance, in which there are so many Things wrong, to join it to our Confession.

16^{thly}, There is another very good Reason; why it should not be there, which is this, *viz.* We are told in the *Advertisement* to this new Impression, that this Impression is much more correct than any of the former, and consequently, so much the fitter for the *poorer* Sort of People, who have not always so much Knowledge, as to correct any Mistakes; but now by this very long
Pre-

Preface, it is made so much *dearer*, that very many cannot purchase it, to whom such a correct Edition, with so good an Index, might be very Beneficial: And why should these poor People be deprived of this Advantage, or obliged to part with so much more Money, which perhaps they can scarcely spare? It is wrote chiefly, I find, against some Dissenters in *England*, who amongst other extravagant Notions they are falling into, have also become Enemies to our Confession of Faith; but what are our People concerned with this; why must they be put to charge to see *English* Dissenters confuted?

Upon the Whole, I hope, Sir, you and every Gospel Minister, will endeavour to get this Preface removed from our Confession of Faith. The oratorical Manner in which it is wrot, and the fine Stile which it abounds in, as well as some good Things which are contained in it, may make it very *fatal* in corrupting the Minds of the rising Generation, if not timeously prevented. The Youth of our Age are too much corrupted by dangerous Books, which come from *England*, they need not any Thing to help forward the hellish Work from amongst our selves, they are already too much inclined to a legal Spirit, and to Toleration and Licentiousness. I hope therefore in this Assembly, you will endeavour

endeavour to get some Remedy concerning this Matter. If the Patrons of the Preface contend it is a good Book, I think then they need not be afraid to let it live by its own Merit; and if it has any, it needs not be joined with the Confession to recommend it; but I think the People ought to be cautioned against it by the Assembly, as they are against the *Marrow of modern Divinity*, and the Places I have mentioned need to be taken Notice of. What this Author says of the *Marrow*, pag. 137. may with much more Justice be applied to his own Performance: *The good Things that may be found in such Writtings, the Piety of their Authors, or the Worth of the Persons who recommend them, only render such Performances more dangerous.* So praying that the Lord may bless this poor and small Essay, of a Well-wisher to his own Cause and Interest, and may inspire the ensuing venerable Assembly to do in this Matter what is most for his own Glory, and for the Preservation and Good of this poor Church; I am, in great Affliction for the Corruptions that are creeping fast in among us, Reverend Sir, yours in the Lord.

P. S. Of the second Part of the Confession, now come forth, and its more dangerous Adjuncts, Forms, Omissions, &c. in my next.

